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STATE ALSO PASS TO USAID  
USAID/W FOR A/AID ANDREW NATSIOS, JBRAUSE  
DCHA/OFDA KISAACS, GGOTTLIEB, MMARK, RTHAYER, BDEEMER  
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA  
DCHA/FFP FOR LAUREN LANDIS  
DCHA DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR WILLIAM GARVELINK  
ANE DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR MARK WARD  
BANGKOK FOR OFDA SENIOR REGIONAL ADVISOR TOM DOLAN  
KATHMANDU FOR OFDA REGIONAL ADVISOR WILLIAM BERGER  
GENEVA FOR USAID KYLOH  
ROME PASS FODAG  
NSC FOR MELINE  
CDR USPACOM FOR J3/J4/POLAD  
USEU PASS USEC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [AEMR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA - EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMIS: USAID/DART  
SITREP #20

REF: Colombo 646

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Summary  
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1. The USAID/Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) field officer (FO) and USAID/Colombo Humanitarian Assistance Program Manager (HAPM) traveled to eastern Sri Lanka from April 6 to 9 to monitor USAID/Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)-funded programs and review the progress of tsunami recovery efforts. USAID staff met with representatives from Catholic Relief Services (CRS), World Vision (WVI), Sri Lanka Red Cross (SLRC), GOAL, CARE, and Mercy Corps during the course of this field visit. All of these agencies are involved in tsunami clean-up projects or construction of transitional housing. Non-governmental organization (NGO)-sponsored clean-up projects appear to be winding down in eastern Sri Lanka, although some cash-for-work initiatives will continue for the time being to remove remaining debris from areas affected by the tsunami. In reference to transitional housing projects, NGOs cited the same constraints reported earlier (reftel) that have retarded progress in moving displaced persons from emergency shelters into appropriate shelters for extended stays: i.e. shortage of raw materials, delays in clearing construction materials through ports, rapidly rising costs of material and labor, confusion over Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) policy on rebuilding in the designated coastal buffer zone, and difficulty in identifying appropriate sites for location of transitional housing. However, NGOs are working hard to find solutions to some of the challenges facing the transitional housing sector and substantial progress is being made. End summary.

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Batticaloa District  
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2. According to a recent report from the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the pace of construction of transitional shelters in Batticaloa District remains slow. Just over 9,000 semi-permanent shelters are currently required in total in the district. Of these, some 1,600 have been constructed through the first week of April. The Shelter Task Force concluded this week that the main reasons for the slow progress continues to be the lack of sufficient supply of construction materials and skilled labor, the wish of beneficiaries to immediately move from temporary into permanent shelter, as well as the limited capacity of the Urban Development Authority (UDA) and the Survey Department.

3. CRS re-iterated that there are 9,000 families in need of shelter in Batticaloa District. CRS plans to build transitional shelter for 2,300 families in the district. Deutsche Gesellschaft fr Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) is the head of the Shelter Task Force in Batticaloa with 20-30 NGOs participating in shelter construction projects.

4. The CRS representative in Batticaloa mentioned that the lack of building materials has hindered their progress in building the 2,300 transitional shelters. There are shortages of timber, high-quality plastic, and cadjan (matted palm leaves to form thatch). CRS has imported timber from countries in the region, but recent changes in the customs regulations have slowed down clearance from Sri Lanka's ports. CRS does expect to clear a load of timber through customs by the second week of April, and this will provide them with enough material to construct 2,000 housing units (1,000 of them in Batticaloa District). CRS is also managing to procure some quantities of timber within Sri Lanka in order to boost

its production of transitional shelters. The arrival of Oxfam's 12,000 - 13,000 cubic feet of timber from Australia in May 2005 will support CRS efforts to build transitional housing as a portion of this consignment will be dedicated to the CRS program.

15. USAID staff visited one of the sites in Batticaloa District where CRS is currently building transitional shelters. Construction was moving quickly with over 25 units already in place accompanied by latrines and washing facilities that had been built with support from the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF). The team interviewed several residents of the transitional shelters, and all seemed to appreciate the transition from emergency shelters to the solid-structure single-family houses.

16. While stopping by one unit under construction, USAID staff learned that the frame of the house can be erected within a matter of a few hours with the entire unit completed in less than four days. Neighbors frequently are helping each other with the construction of transitional shelters.

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Ampara District  
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17. USAID staff met with representatives of World Vision (WVI) in Kalmunai where final distributions of USAID/OFDA-funded hygiene kits had just been completed. WVI's field officer noted that the hygiene kits were generally well received. With the completion of the distribution of USAID/OFDA-financed hygiene kits, WVI will likely continue distributing additional hygiene kits to tsunami-affected displaced persons in camps in Ampara District, for the time being, with funds from other donors. The lack of access of many displaced households to adequate income-generating activities serves as the basis for WVI's decision to continue with the distribution of hygiene kits.

18. GOAL originally planned to construct 2,500 transitional shelter units when drafting their initial proposal to USAID/OFDA. However, given the rising costs for materials and labor required per unit, the upgrading of standards for transitional shelter mandated by the GOSL, and the appearance of additional NGOs who are building transitional shelter, GOAL has decided to revise its target from 2,500 units down to 1,200 units of transitional housing. With the cost of each shelter going up significantly due to inflation, GOAL will have to reduce the number of units produced if it is to maintain the standards of quality set by the GOSL, donors, UN agencies, and NGOs.

19. GOAL field officers noted that they had experienced difficulties in the allocation of land by the GOSL for the construction of transitional shelter. In an effort to overcome this challenge, staff from GOAL has been busy visiting the owners of open plots of land to request permission to build transitional shelters for the tsunami-displaced households. GOAL has achieved some success in finding sites for construction, mostly on small plots that permit the construction of under a dozen shelters. [Comment: The creation of the GOSL's coastal buffer zone that prohibits the re-building of damaged/destroyed housing stock within 200 meters of the shore has reduced the options for construction of transitional housing. Areas in the seaside towns and villages of Ampara District are relatively congested leaving little property (aside from the coastal buffer zone area) where transitional shelters can be constructed, thereby slowing down the process of moving displaced families from emergency shelters to sturdier, more weather-proof structures. End Comment.]

110. The USAID team traveled to Akkaraipattu in Ampara District to meet with representatives from CARE. CARE staff explained that they had just completed a debris clearance project funded by USAID/OFDA. CARE's project utilized cash-for-work to employ 1,500 people to remove rubble for 67 villages in the surrounding area.

111. CARE noted that they are planning a distribution of emergency relief supplies to 2,500 households in and around Akkaraipattu. The distribution of emergency relief supplies has been somewhat complicated with many NGOs arriving in the area, but not coordinating their work with other agencies. Many NGOs performed distributions of emergency relief supplies without conducting assessments or registering their beneficiaries. In order to avoid duplication, CARE has registered their beneficiaries and sought out groups that have not yet received emergency relief supplies. CARE is focusing particularly on tsunami-affected households outside of camps since these groups are often overlooked by inexperienced aid agencies that flock to easy-to-find camps for distribution of their relief supplies.

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Aragum Bay/Pottuvil

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¶12. USAID staff traveled from Pottuvil to Aragam Bay over the newly-reopened bridge crossing the bay. The Indian and Sri Lankan militaries collaborated with the Road Development Authority to finish the temporary bridge structure that opened to traffic on May 10.

¶13. USAID staff met with representatives from Mercy Corps in Aragam Bay. Mercy Corps staff provided a tour of their community clean-up project in this tourist-dependent zone that had been developed in collaboration with local groups including the Aragam Bay Tourism Association.

¶14. Local officials in Pottuvil requested that Mercy Corps provide transitional housing for 28 Tamil households displaced by the tsunami. Mercy Corps reported that these families have been pressured by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to avoid moving into transitional housing on sites near the Special Task Force (STF) bases. Mercy Corps did identify a suitable site in Pottuvil, and they are now building transitional housing units for four families displaced by the tsunami.

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